

William Charles Cole Claiborne to Andrew Jackson, September 8, 1814, from Correspondence of Andrew Jackson. Edited by John Spencer Bassett.

New Orleans, September 8, 1814.

Sir, I have to acknowledge the receipt of your several letters under date of ultimo, 1 and to assure you of the Deep interest, I take in the information they convey. Of the Dangers which menace this section of the union, I am fully aware, as well as of the necessity of making immediate and extensive preparations for Defence. I fear your present force is much too limited to enable you to extend protection to the whole District, and with my best exertions, I begin to doubt, whether it will be in my power to give you an efficient support. Hence I have taken the liberty in Letters to the Governors of Kentucky and Tennessee, to intreat them to hasten on Reinforcements.

1 Aug. 30, 1814; see vol. II., p. 40.

Enclosed you have copies of my late General Orders. They may and I trust will be obeyed; But to this moment my fellow citizens have not manifested all that union and zeal the crisis Demands, and their own safety required. There is in this City a much *greater spirit of Disaffection* than I had anticipated, and among the faithful Louisianians, there is a *Despondency* which palsies all my preparations; they see no strong regular force around which they could rally with confidence, and they seem to think themselves not within the reach of seasonable assistance from the Western States. I am assured, Sir, you will make the most judicious disposition of the forces under your Command; But excuse me for suggesting, that the presence of the 7th Regiment now at Chifunctee, at or very near New Orleans, will have the most salutary effect. The Garrison at present here is alarmingly weack, and which is cause of more Regret, since from the *great mixture of*

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persons and character in this City , we have much to apprehend from within as well as from without. The smugglers of Barataria with Lafitte at their head, are still near this city. The contemplated expedition against them has not set out, and I assure you, I begin to think, it would be advisable, for the present, to postpone it; But on conversing with Captain Patterson I find he has received recent Orders from the Secretary of the Navy, respecting this Banditti which makes him greatly solicitous to disperse them. The English have certainly made *propositions* to Lafitte to join them in an attack on New Orleans; But *which* , it seems, were not accepted. some interesting Documents relative to this *Infamous negociation* have been delivered to me, and of which you have copies enclosed. Lafitte and his associates might probably be made useful to us. But of the Expediency of using men of such desperate character in any manner I had Doubts, and those doubts have been since confirmed by the Opinion of a Board of Officers, whom I consulted. During my long residence in this state, I have endeavoured to make myself acquainted with its Geographical position, and have thought much as to the best means of defending the various avenues by which it could be approached. The Bearer Col, Shaumburg 2 one of my Aids de camp, is perfectly acquainted with *my opinions* on this subject, and is instructed to communicate them to you: you will take *them* for what they are worth, perhaps they are erroneous; I have no military Experience, and can only boast of a tolerable knowledge of the country. I have also instructed Col: Shaumburg to inform you the disposition I shall make of the auxiliary militia force from this state (until further orders from you) and of the use of the militia Generally in the event of an attack; But it is for the purpose of learning more immediately your opinions and instructions upon all these points that I have sent this Letter to you by Col: Shaumburg whom I beg leave to introduce to your acquaintance. He possesses my full Confidence. He has had great experience, and you will find him well informed on military subjects.

2 Lt.-Col. Bartholomew Schaumburgh, hitherto deputy quartermaster at New Orleans.

In arresting the Intercourse Between New Orleans and Pensacola you have done right. It was not only a prudent measure of precaution, but of *necessity* . Pensacola is in fact

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an Ennemy's fort, and had our commercial Intercourse with it, continued, the supplies furnished the Enemy, would have so much exhausted our own stock of provisions, as to have occasioned the most serious inconveniences to ourselves. I was on the point of taking on myself, the prohibition of the trade with Pensacola: I had prepared a Proclamation to that effect; and would have Issued it on the very Day, I heard of your Interposition. Enemies to the country may blame you, for your prompt and energetic measures; but in the Person of every Patriot, you will find a supporter. I am very confident of the very lax police in this city, and indeed throughout the state, *with respect to the visits of strangers* : I think with you, that our Country is filled with Spies and Traitors; I have written pressingly upon this subject to the *City authorities* and *Parish Judges* ; I hope some efficient regulations will speedily be adopted by the *first* , and more vigilance exerted for the future by *the latter* .

I have the honor to be Sir, Very respectfully Your most obt. servt.

Note.—The papers relating to the propositions made Lafite, were at first thought to be forgeries; But from information subsequently received no doubt exists in my mind, but the papers received by me, were handed to Lafite by an English officer coming from Pensacola. W. C. C. C.

[*Indorsement:*] Governor Claibourn enclosing Proclamations of Majr. Nicoll etc. to LaFitte and offering him a comm. in the British army.

Sept. 10, 1814. (to be examined)